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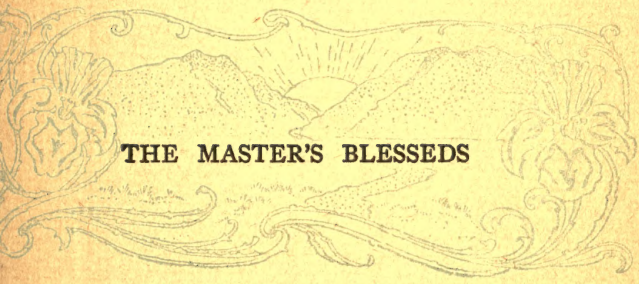

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A DEVOTIONAL STUDY
OF THE BEATITUDES .
BY J. R. MILLER D.D

SECOND EDITION

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THE BEATITUDES

And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain; and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him:

And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying,

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT: FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN: FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK: FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS: FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED.

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL: FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART: FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS: FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE: FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

BLESSED ARE YE, WHEN MEN SHALL REVILE YOU, AND PERSECUTE YOU, AND SHALL SAY ALL MANNER OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY, FOR MY SAKE.

REJOICE, AND BE EXCEEDING GLAD: FOR GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN: FOR SO PERSECUTED THEY THE PROPHETS WHICH WERE BEFORE YOU.

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INTRODUCTION

And He Opened His Mouth, and Taught Them

"My will is set to gather flowers,
Thine blights them in my hand;
Mine reaches for life's sunny hours,
Thine leads through shadow-land;
And all my days go on in ways
I cannot understand."

I

INTRODUCTION

THE Bible is a book of beatitudes and benedictions. "Blesseds" shine all over the inspired pages, like stars in the heavens. God's mercy lies everywhere. Wherever we see Jesus in the gospel story He is giving out blessings as the sun gives light and warmth. He was always reaching out His hand to impart good to some life that needed it. Now it was on the children's heads, now on the leper, now on the blind eyes, now on the sick, now on the

dead, that He laid those gracious hands, and always He left some rich gift with His touch. One day those gentle hands were drawn out and nailed back on the cross, yet even then it was in blessing that they were extended, for it was for our sins that they were thus transfixed on the wood.

Then it is a striking fact that in the very last glimpse we have of Jesus in this world He was in the attitude of imparting a blessing. It was on the mount of ascension. He had been talking with His disciples, and then He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them He was parted from them and received up into heaven. There could be no

truer picture of Jesus taken at any point in His life than as He appeared in that last view which this world had of Him. In heaven now He is still a blessing Saviour, holding up pierced hands before God in intercession, and reaching down gracious hands, full of benedictions for our sad, sinful earth.

It is well for us to study carefully the beatitudes that fell from our Lord's lips while He was here. We are struck at once with their unworldliness. They are altogether different from men's beatitudes. They run directly counter to the maxims which rule in human society and give impulse to human ambitions. "Blessed are they that mourn." Does

the world pronounce any such beatitude as this over the bowed head, the crushed heart, and the darkened life? The world looks upon sorrow as a misfortune. It writes, "Sad are they that mourn." It puts no glory into the clouds of grief. It lights no lamps in the darkness of trial. It gathers no fruits of righteousness from fields of affliction. It sees no possible good out of sorrow.

Nor has the world any beatitude for the meek. It writes meekness down among unmanly qualities. The meek man is lacking in spirit. The manly man, after the world's pattern, is one who will not bear insult, slight, injustice. His blood is up the instant he is wronged;

his eyes flash and his hand is raised to resent the injury. As far as the East is from the West is the spirit of the world from the spirit of Christ's beatitude upon the meek.

Or take the beatitude on peacemakers—that, too, is directly opposed to the ideals prevalent among men. Through the ages wars have stained the earth, and human strifes and conflicts have been waged between nations, clans, families, individuals. The spirit of the world encourages hatred, variance, emulation, jealousy, envy, resentment, rather than love, peace, forbearance, and forgiveness. The world drives angry men to hotter anger. It claps its hands and urges on the un-

seemly quarrel. It taunts the man who is disposed to seek peace. Even boys on the playground drive their fellows to demanding satisfaction by the sneer, "Coward! I would not take that from anybody." It is only the regenerated spirit, the heaven-spirit, in the heart, that seeks to make peace.

Thus all the beatitudes are unworldly, in direct opposition to the maxims and tempers of the natural man. They are so because they are the laws of the spiritual kingdom. They are the maxims of the heavenly life brought down and established in a new kingdom on the earth, a kingdom whose object it is to transform this world into a realm of blessed-

ness, to make the desert blossom with roses, to establish among men a reign of righteousness and peace. Confessedly, the beatitudes are not in harmony with human ideas. They are teachings which are intended to be against nature and to revolutionize nature.

In one of Goethe's tales, he tells of a wonderful silver lamp, which, when placed in a fisherman's hut, changed the hut and all within it to silver. The object of Christ's beatitudes, when admitted to a human heart, is to change it into moral beauty, transforming its selfishness, hardness, cruelty, and inhumanity, to love, gentleness, kindness, sweetness. Thus, while the beatitudes are not

after this world's spirit, they are given with the purpose of making the world over into a condition and a character like the spirit which is in them. These words of Christ are really transcripts of heaven's laws. All life in that home is lowly, meek, merciful, hungry for more of God, pure-hearted.

Hence the beatitudes set us lessons which we must learn if we are going to attain to true spiritual character and be ready for heaven. We must get them into our heart and allow them to work out through the crust of our life until they have transformed us into the temper and disposition of Christ.

Thus we see the use we should make of these golden

sentences. They should not only be pondered and admired for their spiritual beauty, but should be allowed to rule in our heart and work their radical changes in the spirit of our life, leavening our whole being and permeating it with their own new leaven of righteousness. We should not rest content until we get the beatitudes wrought into the very texture of our being, until their lovely graces shine like gems in the adornment of our character.

We can get the beatitudes into our life only by receiving Christ Himself. We cannot reach the stars by climbing up any of earth's mountains. When the tallest peaks have been gained we shall find ourselves

only shivering amid eternal ice and snow, while the stars still seem as far away from us as when we began our ascent from the grassy valley. We never can reach the beatitudes by any weary climbing up the heights of mere human excellence. When we have attained the loftiest summits of earthly possibilities, these heavenly stars will still hang infinitely remote and utterly beyond our climbing. The only way to rise up into the heavenly life of the beatitudes is to have heaven brought down to us, into our heart. There is no other way of reaching these celestial moral altitudes. It was to bring heaven down to those who never could have climbed up to its

holy heights that Jesus became incarnate. He stooped to earth to raise us to the skies. By receiving Him into our heart we enter the family of God on earth, and become heirs of eternal life and glory.

I

The Beatitude for the Poor in Spirit

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT: FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

"Give me the lowest place; not that I dare
Ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died
That I might live and share
Thy glory by Thy side."

I

THE quest of happiness is universal. Men's conceptions of happiness differ, and they seek it along widely divergent paths: yet in every heart the desire is for the same end.

The beatitudes give the secret of happiness, and tell us where and how it may be found. The word blessed means happy. Of course it means more than men usually understand when they use the word. Happiness, as the word indicates, is the pleasure that comes from things that happen. It is on the sur-

face, chiefly, and is affected by every disturbing influence; while blessedness has in it a Divine quality, and is not dependent on circumstances or conditions. Yet blessedness is that which human hearts really crave, and here in the beatitudes are marked out the paths which lead to it.

But the world does not accept either this Divine ideal of happiness or these ways of finding it. It seeks the pleasures of the senses and of the passing moment, and would find it in easy ways. These paths are too rough and steep. These laws of life are too serious. The beatitudes run directly against nature. Still it remains true that here is the secret of

happiness, and that these are the ways which lead to it.

The first beatitude is on poverty of spirit. We must try to get a correct definition —a mistake here will lead us far astray in our quest for the exact quality or condition of blessing indicated.

Precisely, what is poverty of spirit? It is not poverty in one's worldly condition that is intended, else many who are not entitled to it might claim the blessing. It is true that in Luke's gospel the beatitude reads: "Blessed be ye poor," without qualification. No doubt many of the poor to whom the words were spoken that day possessed also the quality of spirit which is the essential

thing. The heart of Jesus was wondrously gentle toward all whose earthly condition was hard. He said He had been anointed to preach the gospel to the poor. When the disciples of John came with their question, one of the evidences that Jesus gave that He was the Messiah, was that to the poor the gospel was preached. It was part of the glory of Christ that He was a friend to the poor. We are in Christ's place to-day, and we must not fail Him in interest in the poor. This is a lesson which the Christian Church will have to learn over again in these new days, if it would save the world.

No doubt also there are blessings in a state of poverty such

as that, for example, in which Jesus Himself grew up—not poverty caused by men's own fault and sin, but the poverty merely of lowly circumstances. Such poor people live purely, honestly, faithfully, contentedly. Their life is ofttimes almost ideal in its simplicity. They know nothing of the great world's wickedness. There are many very charming things in the life of the godly poor. Many of the loveliest virtues flourish in them. They are rich in gracious qualities. Such poor are indeed blessed—theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Thus Coventry Patmore:

"Come, ye who find contentment's very core
In the light store
And daisied path
Of poverty,

And know how more
A small thing that the righteous hath
Availeth, than the ungodly's riches great."

But evidently it is not poverty alone as an earthly condition that is meant in this beatitude. Not all worldly poor are poor in spirit. One may be poor and yet very proud.

Nor did Jesus mean poverty of nature. His own life was the richest in all its endowments and faculties, in all its powers and capacities, that this world ever saw, and yet He was poor in spirit. Nor did He mean spiritual poverty in the sense that one's spiritual life should be feeble and neutral. Christ came into the world not only that men might have life, but that they should have abun-

dant life, fulness of life. Jesus has infinite patience with the weak and with those who have little faith and many infirmities of character; but He wants us to be strong, abounding in all graces, bringing forth much fruit. He does not call poverty of spiritual life blessed.

Nor, again, does this beatitude refer to that affectation of humility which is found in some persons who, in their common speech, are profuse in self-depreciation. They are continually saying uncomplimentary things about themselves, telling others how unworthy they are, of how little value are their works or services. They seem to think that there is a virtue in talking meanly about them-

selves. But this is not true humility. It is most unwholesome. Perhaps it is never quite sincere. If some other one said the mean, depreciatory things about these people, they would probably be angry. Too often it is pride, not humility, that prompts such self-condemning. Jesus Himself, in whom this beatitude found its perfect interpretation, never spoke in this way of Himself. He never said that He had no gifts, no abilities, that He could do nothing. Just before the record which tells of His washing His disciples' feet we read of His consciousness of His Divine origin and destiny—He knew that He came from God, and therefore He did this act of

such wonderful condescension. True humility is entirely consistent with full consciousness of one's power.

What then is meant by being poor in spirit? It consists in the consciousness that one has not in himself the abilities which would make him worthy of God's favour. Not only does he lack the qualities which would make his life holy and beautiful, but he knows that he lacks them. He has a lowly estimate of himself. His type is not the Pharisee, whose prayer showed no sense of need whatever, but the publican, who was overwhelmed by the sense of his unworthiness and his lack of all that would commend him to God. It is the

opposite of pride. It is that spirit which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

To be poor in spirit is to stand before God in penitence, with nothing of our own to commend us, saved by grace alone. This does not hinder the Christian joy which comes from the assurance that we are children of God and heirs of glory. We may appreciate our glorious privileges and rejoice that our names are written in the book of life, and yet not have a shadow of pride, because it is altogether of the mercy and the grace of God that we are thus honoured.

In our relations with others, this quality will save us from all lifting up of ourselves above

them, as if we were better and worthier than they. It will lead us to hold the noblest powers of our being as not too fine to be used in the serving of the lowliest of our fellowmen who need the service. It will lead us to prefer others in honour rather than ourselves. It will keep us from being conscious of the worth in ourselves or of the beauty of the work which we do. Self-consciousness always mars spiritual loveliness. Moses wist not that his face shone. The man who is poor in spirit is not himself aware of the shining of his own life, the splendour of his deeds, or the power of his words and ministries.

There is a beautiful legend

which tells of a saintly man who was very greatly beloved of the angels, who had seen much of his godly life on the earth. The angels asked God to give to this man some new power, some mark of the Divine favour, some new gift which would make him still more useful. They were told to see the man and ask him what special power he would like to have. The angels came and asked him what gift he would choose that God might bestow upon him. He said that he was content, and wanted nothing more. They continued to urge him to choose something which God might do for him or give to him. Would he not like to have power to perform mir-

acles? He said no—that was Christ's work. Would he not like power to lead a great many souls to Christ? He answered, No, for it was the work of the Holy Spirit to convert souls.

The angels still begged him to name something which they might ask God to grant to him. He answered at last, that if he must make a choice, he would like power to do a great deal of good among men without even knowing it. So it was that from that day his shadow, when it fell behind him, where he could not see it, had wondrous healing power; but when it fell before him, where he could see it, it had no such power.

This is the spirit of true holi-

ness—nothing for self, everything for God. One who has learned this lesson is ready for noble service. God loves to use the life that will keep itself out of sight and only honour Him.

It is significant that this beatitude of poverty of spirit comes first in our Lord's chart of life. It is not merely an accidental arrangement of the beatitudes that gives it this place. Poverty of spirit comes first because it must be first. It is the foundation on which alone the fabric of spiritual character can rise. It is the rich soil in which alone other graces will grow and flourish. Hilltops are barren, because the soil is washed off by the rains; but the valleys are fertile be-

cause there the rich deposits gather. In like manner proud hearts are sterile, affording no soil in which spiritual graces can grow; but lowly hearts are fertile with grace, and in them all lovely things grow. If only we are truly poor in spirit, our life will be rich in its fruits.

The form of blessing for the poor in spirit is that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They belong to this kingdom. Their character makes them citizens of it. The kingdom of heaven is wherever the laws of the heavenly life rule in men's hearts. A little child was greatly concerned over the thought of the distance of heaven from him, and the ques-

tion how he could ever get there. His wise mother told him that heaven must first come down to him, that heaven must begin in his heart. This is always true; to be in the kingdom of heaven is to have heaven in us. To be poor in spirit includes all of the heavenly life, and all who have these qualities are already in the beginnings of heaven itself.

II

The Beatitude for the Mourner

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN: FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.

"*Is it raining little flower?*
Be glad of rain.
Too much sun would wither thee,
'Twill shine again.
The sky is very black, 'tis true,
But just behind it shines the blue."

II

THE house of sorrow is a strange place to look for joy. Mourners are the last people the world would call blessed or happy. Men in their quest for happiness would not think of looking for it in the shadows of grief. Yet Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn."

There are many who mourn. Few are the homes in which there is not some grief. Not all sorrows hang crape on the door or wear a badge of grief. There are secret troubles, and tears are shed where no eye sees them fall.

Does Jesus mean that all who mourn are blessed? No; there are sorrows which yield no peaceable fruits of righteousness. There are those who suffer and are not blessed. He means that the state of mourning is one in which Divine blessing may be received rather than in a state of tearlessness. The deepest happiness is not that which has never suffered, but that which has passed through the experience of sorrow and has been comforted. The happiest home is not one which has never known grief, but one whose songs of gladness have in them a minor strain.

There is a story of a German baron who made a great Æolian harp by stretching wires from

tower to tower of his castle. When the harp was ready he listened for the music. But it was in the calm of summer, and in the still air the wires hung silent. Autumn came with its gentle breezes, and there were faint whispers of song. At length the winter winds swept over the castle, and now the harp answered in majestic music.

Such a harp is the human heart. It does not yield its noblest music in the summer days of joy, but in the winter of trial. The sweetest songs of earth have been sung in sorrow. The richest things in character have been reached through pain. Even of Jesus we read that He was made perfect

through suffering. This does not mean that there were evils in His nature which had to be expelled by the heat of trial, that there was dross in the gold of His being which only the fire could remove. The meaning is that there were elements even in His sinless humanity which could be brought to full ripeness only through pain.

There is given us in the Apocalypse a glimpse of the heavenly life, in which this same truth is revealed. It was in a vision of the redeemed, singing their praises to God. Among them were some who appeared to have special glory —a great multitude which no man could number, gathered out of all nations, standing in

the place of honour before the throne, wearing white robes and carrying palms in their hands. When the question was asked, "Who are these highly favoured ones and whence came they?" the answer was, "These are they which came out of great tribulation." This joyous multitude came from homes of sorrow. They were the suffering ones on earth who had passed through a baptism of tears. In heaven they wear the white robes, stand nearest to the throne, and bear the emblems of the completest victoriousness.

How strikingly this vision interprets the beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn!" Earth regards suffering as a mis-

fortune. The world pities those who are called to endure sorrow. The condition of mourning is one from which men shrink. But in the kingdom of heaven those are the favoured ones who are called to suffer. Instead of being the unfortunate, they are the blessed.

The same teaching runs through all the New Testament. Affliction is not a mark of the Divine disfavour, but a token of the Divine love. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Instead of being hurtful to the life, working harm and marring, trial promotes the cleansing of the heart and the enrichment of the character. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; never-

theless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

The secret of this strange teaching is revealed in the second part of the beatitude. Why are they who mourn blessed? It is because they shall be comforted. It is not in the mourning that the blessedness lies, but in the comfort which comes to those who mourn. Sorrow in itself is not a blessing. Sickness, pain, affliction, trial, are not favours in themselves. These experiences can be nothing else but hard and bitter. It is only in their fruits that the blessing comes.

The divine comfort is such a revealing of love and good that it is worth while to mourn in

order to receive it. It is a blessing, too, which we never can have until we have entered the experience of sorrow. We should never know of the glory of the stars if the sun did not go down; but it would be a sore loss to us if we were to live our three-score and ten years in this world without ever seeing the wonder of the starry skies. It is a blessing to have the night come that we may see the splendour of the heavens. We should never know God's marvellous comfort if we never had sorrow. "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted," means that it is well worth our while to be a mourner, with sad heart, in order to have such revealing. So rich a bless-

ing is there in this heavenly comfort that it were nothing less than a misfortune to go through life without receiving it.

There is an old tradition which tells of the experience of our first parent at the setting of the sun, on the day of his creation. As he watched the glorious orb sink toward the horizon, it seemed to him that only calamity could come to the earth and the canopy of light and blue, when the sun had disappeared. With dread and terror he waited for the coming of the darkness. But lo! not distress and desolation, but new and marvellous revealing followed.

"Creation widened in man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed

Within thy beams, O sun! Or who could find,
Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs they made us blind!"

So we dread sorrow. As we see it coming,—for example, as we watch the approach of death to some dearly loved one whose life has been the very sun of our existence, it seems to us that the darkness coming upon us can bring only utter desolation and unrelieved gloom; that nothing of joy and beauty will be left to us when the light of human love has gone. But when at last our friend has passed away and we find ourselves wrapped in the night of sorrow, lo! a glory of Divine comfort stands forth revealed in the darkness.

What Christian mourner has not been amazed in the experiences of his grief at finding such

wonderful new things in the Bible? He had read the precious words over and over, a thousand times, during his days of happiness, but he had never seen these wonderful divine comforts in them before. The truth is, he could not see them while human joy flooded his life. They lay concealed within the brightness of earthly light and could be revealed only in darkness. Blessed are they that mourn, for thus and thus only could they ever know God's special grace of comfort.

What is this comfort which it is so blessed a thing to know? Few words are more generally misunderstood than this word comfort. Many of us think we are comforting people when we

go and sit down beside them in the time of their trouble, and in our own measure enter with them into their experiences, going over the sad details of their grief, yet saying not one uplifting word. But that is not God's way of comforting His sorrowing children. The word comfort means to give strength. When Jesus was passing through the agony of Gethsemane, the Father comforted Him by sending an angel to strengthen Him. The cup might not pass, but the Sufferer's heart was cheered by the angel's ministry, so that He was enabled to drink it even gladly.

That is the way God would comfort all His children in their sorrow. He may not spare them

the grief, because there is blessing in it, either for themselves or for others; but if they must drink the cup, He would strengthen them for it. In one of the Psalms there is a word which is full of rich suggestion. We are bidden to cast our burden upon the Lord. In the margin, however, is the word gift, as another reading,—"Cast thy gift upon the Lord." So our burden is God's gift to us. This is true whatever the burden may be,—duty, sorrow, pain, loss, care. Being God's gift there must be a blessing in it, something good, something we could not miss without sore loss. It may be a blessing for ourselves, or it may be for others,—in the garden it was the blessing of the world's

redemption which was in the cup that was pressed to the lips of the holy Sufferer. In every case, our burden is God's gift, and it would not be a kindness to us if He were to lift it away.

But there is more of the promise. We are to cast our burden upon the Lord and He will sustain us. That is, He will give us strength to carry our load, to endure our suffering. The story of St. Paul's thorn in the flesh illustrates this. The torturing burden was not removed, but instead there came grace sufficient—the strength of Christ to balance the human weakness, so that St. Paul was enabled to rejoice in his infirmities because of the blessing which came to him through them.

This, then, is part of the blessing which comes to those who mourn — they receive the strength of God to sustain them in their sorrow. The burden may not be lightened, but it is really an answer to the heart's cry for help if new strength be given. Then the sufferer is enabled to sing,—the sorrow is changed into joy.

There is blessing also in the fruits of sorrow in the life of those who abide in Christ. There is no doubt that suffering waits at the gateway to all the higher and better things of spiritual experience and attainment. We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven. There is a baptism of fire—a baptism of pain, that

is necessary in connection with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Even Jesus Christ received this twofold baptism. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things He suffered. Much more is it necessary for us, if we would reach the uplands of God, to go through the way of pain. There must be a purifying in the fire, if we would be cleansed of our sinfulness; and we must burn,—the oil of our life must be consumed,—if we would shine.

There are blessings, therefore, which we cannot obtain if we cannot accept and endure suffering. There are joys which can come to us only through sorrow. There are revealings of Divine truth which we can

get only when earth's lights have gone out. There are harvests which can grow only after the ploughshare has done its rough work. "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." Not to be willing to endure pain and suffering is not to be able to get the best things of grace.

"We must live through the weary winter
If we would value the spring;
And the woods must be cold and silent
Before the robins sing.
The flowers must lie buried in darkness
Before they can bud and bloom;
And the sweetest and warmest sunshine
Comes after the storm and gloom."

III

The Beatitude of Meekness

Blessed are the Meek: for They shall Inherit the Earth

"That thou mayest pray for them
Thy foes are given:
I bring thee fretful friends that
thou mayest train
Thy soul to patience."

III

MEEKNESS is not an easy grace. Indeed, no grace comes easily. It is the heavenly life into which we are being fashioned, and nothing less than a moral and spiritual revolution will produce in us the heavenly qualities. The old must die that the new may live. Spiritual graces are not merely amiable traits of nature trained and cultivated into gentleness — they are transformations wrought by the Divine Spirit.

An old prophecy, in a vision of the reign of the Messiah, pictured the wolf dwelling with

the lamb, the leopard lying down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion in close companionship. Whatever we may say as to the literal fulfilment of this prophecy in the subduing and taming of ferocious animals, it has its higher fulfilment in the regeneration of humanity which is wrought through the gospel. The wolf in men's disposition and temper is changed into lamblike gentleness.

Christian meekness, for example, is a converted wolf. Nature is resentful. When struck, it strikes back. When wronged, it demands reparation. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," is its law. It is not natural for any one to

bear injuries patiently, to submit without bitterness to unkindness, to forgive personal wrongs or insults, and not to cherish grudges. It is only the nature which has been regenerated by grace which follows the law of meekness.

Indeed, no heathen morality ever gave meekness a place among the fine things in character. The best that Aristotle could say of it was that it was a "mean inclining to a defect." It is only in the Christian ideal that meekness shines as a virtue. The world calls it unmanly, a cowardly quality, a spirit unworthy of one who wears the human form. The boy on the playground who submits to wrong or injustice

without resentment, is sneered at as soft. It is only in the new manhood which Christ came to create and inspire, that meekness is set to shine as one of its divinest features.

What is meekness? It is defined in one dictionary as submission to the divine will; patience and gentleness, from moral and religious motives. Another definition gives this—gentle or mild of temper, self-controlled, not easily provoked or irritated, forbearing under injuries and annoyances.

There are two different phases of meekness indicated in these definitions—a submissive spirit toward God, and a patient, quiet, forgiving spirit toward men. We should be

meek toward God. We should accept whatever He sends, without complaint, without a rebellious word or feeling. It is easy to find reasons why we should do this. He is our Father, and loves us with a love which we never can doubt. Nothing but good can ever come from Him to us. Whatever the form of the providence may be, we know it enfolds a blessing.

We are confident, too, of God's wisdom. He makes no mistakes in any of His dealings with us. When our ways are set aside for His, we know it is because His are better. Dr. Payson was asked, when enduring great bodily affliction, if he could see any particular reason for the dispensation. "No," he

replied; "but I am as well satisfied as if I could see ten thousand reasons; God's will is the very perfection of all reason."

When we think of these great truths concerning God, our heart should be quieted in any experience of pain or sorrow, or in any mystery of darkness, and it should appear reasonable to us to wait and suffer in patience, and with trustful, songful acquiescence. Why should the frail creature doubt the wisdom and the goodness of the strong Creator? Why should the child distrust the love and wisdom of the Father? With faith in God it should be easy for us to be submissive toward Him.

The Meek

"The Spirit of God is still, and gentle and mild and sweet,
What time His omnipotent, glorious will guideth the worlds at His feet;
Controlling all lesser things, this turbulent heart of mine
He keepeth as under His folded wings in a peace serene—divine."

It is easy to see the blessing there is in such submissive trust. The captive bird which flies violently against the wires of its cage, trying to escape, only beats and bruises its own breast and wings, and at the end of its frantic struggles is still a captive. Alike hurtful to one's self and unavailing are all resistings of God's will.

Wiser far is the bird which, when it finds itself shut in the cage, unable to escape, begins to sing, filling its prison with sweet music. It spares itself

all hurt. It shows a spirit of trust and confidence. Then even in its captivity it scatters benedictions all about it in its notes of cheerful song.

This illustrates the meekness with which God's children should accept even the most painful events of life. Their faith should never fail. They should look upon the inevitable, not as a decree of stern fate to which they can only submit, but as a revealing of the Father's will, and therefore something holy and sacred, something, too, in which a thousand blessings of love are folded up.

The form of the blessing promised to the meek is very suggestive—"they shall inherit

the earth." Resistance to God's will gets nothing for its striving. A man cannot contend with God and hope to overcome omnipotence. The struggling bird has only hurts and bruises as the result of its struggles. It has broken no wire of its prison. It has loosened no chain. It has opened no door. But the bird which cheerfully accepts its bondage and sings in its prison, is no longer a captive. It is as free as if it were soaring in mid-air. All the world belongs to it. Acquiescence in any suffering already has the victory over the suffering. The Christian who rejoices in the midst of pain and trial has overcome all pain and trial.

St. Paul was the freest man

in Philippi that night when he lay in the deepest dungeon, his feet in stocks, his body covered with gashes. His heart was free and he filled all the prison with his hymns of joy. His meekness made him the inheritor of all things. The poor man who has the joy of the Lord in his poverty owns all things—the blue skies are his; the beautiful fields are his; the springs of water, the rivers, the hills, the mines, all the treasures of the earth, are his. Meekness makes a man free indeed, and gives him possession of all things.

The other phase of meekness is that which is manifested in our relations with men. It commands us to be mild in

temper and disposition, not to strive, to be gentle, not easily provoked, slow to anger, not resentful.

The meek spirit has been compared to the fragrant wood which bathes in perfume the ax that cuts into it. It is like those flowers which give out their sweet odour only when they are crushed. Its best is revealed only under injury or wrong. It was said of a certain saintly man that people never found the richest treasures of his nature until they did him a wrong or showed him an unkindness; then his heart poured out its surprise of love.

It was thus with Christ Himself. The world would never

have known the most marvellous love of that heart if it had treated Him only with honour and affection. It was men's sins that led to the wonderful revealing of the cross. The same is true in smaller measure of all meekness; we would not know of its sweetness were it not for the injuries and wrongs it receives.

Christian meekness is not mere softness or easy pliancy of disposition. The history of the word shows that the quality has always been regarded by men as wanting in the heroic element. In several languages it means soft, mild, pliant, supple. There are those who by nature are submissive and non-resisting, who are easily im-

posed upon, who allow others to take advantage of them, and will never lift a finger to assert or maintain their rights. But that is not Christian meekness—that is easy-going human nature. The meek man is he who feels keenly the insult or the injustice, and is naturally disposed to claim his rights or to resent the injury, but who curbs his feeling, controls himself because he is a Christian, and lets love have sway, returning kindness for unkindness. It is represented thus in one of Browning's poems:

"He feels he has a fist, then folds his arms
Crosswise, and makes his mind up to be meek."

Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit. It is the love of Christ in the heart overcoming natural

feeling. It manifests itself in patience with disagreeable and unreasonable people, in the forgiveness of injuries, in the quiet enduring of wrongs, in the returning of good for evil, in uncomplaining self-forgetfulness for the sake of others.

A Brahman compared the Christian missionary to a mango tree. It puts forth blossoms and then weights its branches with fruits. For itself? No, for the hungry who come to it for food. By-and-by the tree is assailed with clubs and stones. Its leaves are torn and its branches are bruised and broken. It is stripped bare. But does it resent this cruel treatment and refuse to yield fruit another year? No; next

year it is more fruitful than ever. So it is with the Christian missionary, said the Hindu. He gives his rich life for the helping of others. He endures enmity and persecution, but his only response is more help, new fruits of love, the repaying of wrong and cruelty with love's best gifts.

That is Christian meekness. It had its highest exemplification in the Master Himself, who always returned good for evil, who at the last, when nailed on a cross, gave from the cruel wounds made by men the blood of men's redemption. It is thus we must live if we would be indeed followers of Christ.

The blessing of meekness comes to every one who truly

learns the lesson. To worldly thought it seems loss indeed to allow one's self to be wronged, injured, thrust aside and trodden down. How can one inherit the earth when one is continually being robbed of the things which are esteemed as earth's chief good? Yet there is a sense in which those who seem to lose all things really gain all things. It is told of Phillips Brooks, that once, after listening quietly, with deep sympathy, to a young woman who came to him with a story of a grievous wrong which had been done to her, he said to her, "I am very sorry for you. It is hard to be misunderstood, injured, wronged, in this manner. Yet, shall I hurt you more if I tell you that I am not so sorry

for you as for some one else?" Then he spoke to her of his pity for the wrong-doer, who had so needlessly caused such pain, adding, "It is so pathetic to have made so much trouble in a world already so full of heartaches!"

It is never the one that is wronged or injured who is the real loser, but the one that does the evil. He who suffers and sins not, but keeps loving and sweet, is enriched by what seem losses. His heart is at peace, and this fills the world with beauty for him.

"If peace be in the heart,
The wildest winter storm is full of solemn beauty,
The midnight lightning-flash but shows the path of duty;
Each living creature tells some new and joyous story;
The very trees and stones all catch a ray of glory
If peace be in the heart.

The spirit of meekness also yields contentment, and he who is contented is rich, owning all things. Then love enriches. Nothing hurts one's life as resentment does. It poisons all joy and embitters every sweet pleasure. But love fills the heart with cheer and makes all the world bright with the smile of God. Thus the meek are the inheritors of all things.

IV

The Beatitude of Hunger

Blessed are They Which do Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness: for They Shall be Filled

"I asked for bread: God gave a stone instead.
Yet while I pillowed there my weary head,
The angels made a ladder of my dreams,
Which upward to celestial mountains led.
And when I woke, beneath the morning's beams,
Around my resting-place fresh manna lay;
And, praising God, I went upon my way;
For I was fed.

IV

We would probably say, at first thought, that the satisfied are the happy, that those who have no desire unfulfilled are the blessed. We do not think of intense and painful hunger as a desirable state. Yet the Lord pronounces one of His beatitudes upon the unsatisfied, those who hunger and thirst.

However, it is not in the condition of hunger, itself, that the blessedness lies, but in that of which hunger is the sign and that to which it leads. It is the token of life and health. A dead man has no desire, no longing

for anything. One who has no craving for that which is good, no thirst for God, no yearning to be holy, to be like Christ, to be filled with the Spirit, is dead.

There is a pathetic story of one who was in declining health, and went to the warm South in the winter in search of renewed life. She wrote to her friends cheerful letters, in which she spoke of the charm of the place, the wonderful luxuriance of all vegetable growths, the abundance of food upon the table. Yet every letter contained the sad note, "If only I could eat, I should soon get well here; but I have no appetite." Then in a few weeks her frail body was borne back to her home—dead amid plenty, not

for lack of food, but for lack of hunger. Blessed are they who hunger, for hunger is a mark of health and of vigorous life, while the want of it tells of disease and coming death.

The same is true of the mind. Hunger is blessed because it is a mark of intellectual health. While one craves knowledge and is eager to press out upon the broad sea to discover the new worlds that lie beyond it, one's mind is alive and in wholesome state. Satisfaction with one's present knowledge, without desire to learn more, is evidence that one has reached the limit of one's mental growth. The artist had reason to weep when he found himself satisfied even with his magnificent crea-

tion, recognising the truth that he had now reached his best and that there was no further progress for him.

In spiritual life the principle is the same. They who hunger are blessed. The unsatisfied are they whose souls are prospering and in health. Not to be eager to know more of God and to have more of the life of God in the heart, is to be spiritually dead. Longing is an invariable mark of true religion. Not the soul at ease, content, satisfied, but the soul thirsting for God, is the scriptural ideal of Godlikeness. Men are represented as hungry and thirsty. The soul is too great to feed on anything this world can furnish. The beginning of salvation is the

awaking of a desire to find God, to come back into His favour, to be restored to fellowship with Him, to be blessed with His love and to be filled with His life. The state of true blessedness is one of hunger for God.

Thus Jesus spoke of Himself as bread, the bread of life, offered to meet this spiritual hunger. He said He was the bread of God, bread from heaven, of which if a man should eat he would live forever. The faith that turns to Christ and receives the blessings that He has brought to the world is spiritual longing. It begins in a consciousness of personal need which finds full satisfaction in Christ. Not to hunger is therefore to go unblessed. It

tells of a soul satisfied without God. But a yearning for God is evidence of the beginning of spiritual life.

There is a story of a child who had dwelt by the sea, but who was found by a wealthy relative and carried away to an inland valley. His home there was more beautiful and luxurious, but he was not happy. Something was wanting. He missed the music of the ebbing and flowing tides. He missed the dewy spray on his cheeks. A feeling of homesickness possessed him. One day he climbed to the top of a high hill, and far off he saw a blue spot on the horizon. "The sea! The sea!" he cried, with trembling heart. He rested not

till he had found his way back to his heart's loved home. So it is with the soul that becomes homesick for God. It finds no satisfaction till it rests in God. Blessed is such hunger, for it tells of hope.

Hunger is blessed also because of the good to which it leads. It is the inspiration of every worthy advance and development. It drives the scholar to his patient and unwearying researches which result in benefit to the world. It sends the explorer out on untraversed seas to discover new lands with their treasures. In the Christian, it is hunger for God and for good, and for the privilege of ministering. It is the inspiration of everything beautiful. Spiritual

longing is the fire in the heart which impels to all consecration, to all holy effort, to all giving and doing, to all self-denial and sacrifice. It is the empty hand stretched up to God to receive the gifts of grace. It is the fire in the heart which kindles all love for God and burns on the altar in all pure desire.

It is not all longing that has the seal of blessedness upon it. It is "they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" to whom the promise of satisfaction is given. Righteousness is goodness. It includes all that is worthy and Godlike. The lofty standard is set in our Lord's teaching:—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father

which is in heaven is perfect." We have another glimpse of it in the prayer that we may do God's will "as it is done in heaven." The life of heaven is the pattern for those who are seeking after righteousness. It begins in the heart when Christ is first received, and works itself out into all the life and character. In its perfection, this righteousness is the image of Christ—a measure which embraces all moral excellence.

It is important that we understand well the true nature of the hunger to which such blessedness is promised. It is not a vague and empty longing. There is a craving which is not the sign of wholesome spiritual life—it is sentimental, morbid,

sometimes sickly. It is not a desire to know more of God, to be made more like God, to be led into deeper consecration or more perfect self-surrender to Christ. It is only an idle, dreamy yearning which leads to nothing worthy or beautiful.

Righteousness is something very real. It is holiness of life. It is Christlikeness in character. It is uprightness and integrity in all conduct, obedience to all God's commandments, the cheerful acceptance of the divine will even when it traverses our own will. This is very different from many persons' thought of holiness. They think of it as a sort of halo encircling the brow, a spiritual ecstasy too sublime, too ethereal, for this world's

every-day life. But the righteousness which the Bible sets as copy for our living is righteousness which takes the commandments as working rules for all life.

The longing which climbs to heaven's blessedness is longing for the mind that was in Christ Jesus in His condescension and ministry. That was an intense longing to do the Father's will, and to save a lost world. Many people sing with fervour, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and have no real desire to get nearer to God. Many pray to be made more like Christ, who never think what it would mean to them to become indeed like Christ.

Nor does this hunger for

righteousness exhaust itself in mere longing. There is too much idle longing. It says its prayers and sings its hymns and breathes out its sighs and aspirations for holiness, but takes no step toward the realization of the righteousness it so yearns to possess. Not so easily can this righteousness be attained. No artist ever dreamed a great picture upon his canvas; it takes skill and toil to set his dream in colour, so that its beauty may charm the beholder. No good man ever longed himself into a splendid character; it took years of patient self-denial, self-restraint and self-discipline to build up the life which so reflects the holiness of Christ.

True hunger for righteous-

ness puts its longings into holy endeavours which grow into worthy deeds. It dreams beautiful dreams, but it seeks at once to bring its dreams down into the life of the common days and to translate them into beautiful acts. The visions of loveliness which raise the soul in the hour of prayer, or at the Lord's table, or on some transfiguration mount, it seeks to work out in lovely character, in Christlike disposition, or in loving service.

Nothing is less profitable in Christian life than emotions which come to nothing, good resolves which are never kept, ecstatic feelings which fade out and leave the heart colder than before.

"We dream of a fountain of knowledge,
We loiter along on its brink,
And toy with the crystalline waters,
Forever just meaning to drink.
Night falls, and our tasks are unfinished;
Too late our lost chances we rue.
Dear Love, while our comrades were doing,
We only were *meaning* to do."

The longing that is blessed seeks at once to climb to the new height it has discovered. The heavenly vision granted to it, it attempts to paint on the canvas. Thus it makes each to-day better than yesterday, each to-morrow fairer than to-day.

Very precious is the promise which is made to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness—"they shall be filled." No such assurance comes to those who hunger after earthly pleasures.

"Life's thirst quenches itself
With draughts which double thirst."

We are not to infer that the hunger is fully satisfied at once, that the moment one begins to long for righteousness, desire ceases. There is a satisfaction which does come as soon as the soul finds its home in Christ. Peace then begins. There should be no longer any unhappy restlessness. But satisfaction is not complete and never can be in this world. The peace of God which is promised passeth understanding, and yet it is to come into our heart with tides like the flowing of an infinite ocean. The hunger is to continue, for we are to continue to grow in grace until grace ends in glory.

We must not suppose that the blessedness of Christian faith is

something which we can take in at a single draught, as one would drink a cupful of water. It is not an experience in which we reach fulness of joy in one hour. It is something whose meaning it will take eternity to learn. As the old Latin hymn of Peter Damiani has it:

"Ever filled and ever seeking, what they have they still desire,
Hunger there shall fret them never, nor satiety shall tire,—
Still enjoying whilst aspiring, in their joy they still aspire."

It is a comfort to us to know that Christ promises to satisfy all our longing. One of the world's religions proposes to give happiness by quenching desire. Destroy life's longings, it teaches, and the soul will be at peace. But Christ offers to

satisfy every hunger and thirst. The desires and longings of our nature are not sinful; they do not need to be destroyed. A man found a torrent in the mountain. As it rushed on impetuously it could only work ruin. He built a flume for it and carried its waters in a quiet stream into the valley, where they turned spindles and wheels, watered the fields and gave drink to the thirsty. Thus Christ would take the mighty cravings and longings of human souls and yoke them for obedient life and holy service. That is the way He would satisfy our longings – not by destroying them, but by leading them in ways of righteousness. If we take Christ's yoke upon us and learn

of Him, we shall find rest unto our soul.

No doubt the blessing seems ofttimes to come slowly. Our hungers seem not to be satisfied. We continually fall far below the excellence we seek to reach. The pure flowers of our heart's intentions, blooming at the opening of the day, lie withered and stained in the dust at the day's close. We fail in our attempts to make our dreams and visions come true.

But we should never be discouraged. Even though we appear not to be growing into the divine likeness, we should never become weary. Every earnest striving, with faith in Christ, sets our feet a little higher on the steep mountain path. Even

when we seem not to be advancing, we are really in some way climbing upward, and at last we shall come out of all the struggles into full blessedness at the feet of Christ.

"O when the times of restitution come,
The sweet times of refreshing come at last,
My God shall fill my longings to the brim.
Therefore, I wait and look and long for Him,
Not wearied, though the work is wearisome,
Nor fainting, though the time be almost past."

V

The Beatitude for the Merciful

Blessed are the Merciful: for They Shall Obtain Mercy

"Ask God to give thee skill
In comfort's art;
That thou mayest consecrated be
And set apart
Unto a life of sympathy."

V

MERCY is a shining quality. Yet, like all the qualities in this cluster of beatitudes, its brightness is heavenly, not earthly. Mercifulness is not a fruit of nature; it is not found nor even remotely suggested among the "works of the flesh." It is a fruit of the Spirit. It is born from above.

Mercifulness manifests itself in two ways—first, in patience and forbearance toward those who do wrong, leniency toward those who fail; and secondly, in ministrations of kindness and love to those who are in need.

The first of these manifestations is negative. The merciful are not exacting. They do not insist on claiming all that is due to them. They do not deal harshly with those who injure or offend them. The word mercy has in it always the thought of grace. It is kindness to the undeserving. The merciful are those who look with pity upon the unworthy, and who are forgiving and long-suffering. In this view, mercy is akin to meekness.

The other phase of the quality is active and positive. The merciful are not only disposed to be forbearing and patient; they are ready to show their love in ministries of kindness, not to the good and worthy

only, but to the unworthy and undeserving as well. They have a heart of gentleness which prompts them to acts of mercy.

It is easy to find the lesson of mercifulness written out for us in the Book in which all our life's lessons are set down. We find it first in God Himself. What if God were not merciful? Where then would be our hope? The first favour we must ask and receive of Him is mercy. Until we are forgiven we cannot stand in His presence. Mercy is the first word of blessing we hear as we look up into the divine face with penitence in our heart. The cross of Christ is the most wonderful point in all history, and the cross is the divine mercy giving itself, the

Lamb of God bearing the sin of the world. Everywhere God's mercy shines. We live under a canopy of love.

"Why seek ye for Jehovah
Mid Sinai's awful smoke?
The burning bush now shelters
A sparrow's humble folk,
The curve of God's sweet heaven
Is the curve of the leaf of oak;
The Voice that stilled the tempest
To the little children spoke,—
The bread of life eternal
Is the bread He blessed and broke."

When we turn to the narrative of God's dealing with men, it is one long story of mercy, divine forbearance, pity, compassion. In every line of the record of Christ's life we find the same marvellous quality. We see it in His infinite patience with sin, injustice and wrong. We see it also in His life of love, in His ministry of kindness, in

His unceasing work of compassion.

One of the old legends says that as our Lord walked away from the grave, on the morning of His resurrection, lovely flowers grew in the path where His footfalls pressed. It is only a legend, but there is a sense in which sweetest flowers did indeed grow in every path which those holy feet pressed. He went about doing good. We can count up a certain number of miracles which are recorded in the Gospels, but the miracles were the smallest part of His acts of love. His days were filled with unrecorded mercies. No one ever came into His presence in receptive mood and went away without a blessing.

His life was full of merciful deeds.

When we turn to the teachings of Christ we find the lesson set for us in shining lines on every page. He called it love—He said His followers should love not God alone, but their fellow men as well. He was careful, too, to break down every fence, so that not one man or woman should be left out from the company of those whom we are to love.

He was particular to say that we are to love our enemies. Any one can love a friend. Any one can be kind to one who is kind to him. But we are to go beyond what common human nature would do—we are to bless them that curse us,

do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us.

Then in that wonderful story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus made it most clear that the love which His followers are to exhibit must not be a mere gentle sentiment, like so much of what people call religion, but must be a love that ministers and stops at no cost in its ministering. The priest and the Levite were types of good men—we need not say harsh things about them, for the great majority of modern religionists do the same thing every day—but they lacked the mercifulness which the need before them demanded. Then came the Good Samaritan, a man who made no profession

whatever of love for the Jews. The wounded man by the wayside hated him, but this did not hinder the flow of the Samaritan's compassion in immediate, costly and most helpful ministry. That is our Lord's thought of what mercifulness should be ready ever to do.

In His representation of the judgment, our Lord shows in a wonderful way the place which mercifulness has in the divine thought of a good and true Christian life. Those who are called to the right hand of the King are not the great theologians, the brilliant scholars, the distinguished patrons of Christianity, but those who have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, shown

hospitality to the stranger, clothed the naked and visited the sick and the prisoner—that is, the merciful, who with gentle heart and thoughtful sympathy have ministered to the needy ones of earth.

These are mere fragments of the teaching of our Lord inculcating the duty of mercifulness. His whole gospel pulsates with tenderness. There never beat in this world such another heart of gentleness as the heart of Jesus, and His followers are to be what He was—repeating the pity, the compassion, the patience, the comfort, the sympathy of His life, wherever they go. Everything that is harsh or unmerciful is denounced as unworthy

a disciple. The servant of God must not strive, but be gentle, said St. Paul. Very rarely did Jesus utter a severe word, yet He spoke with burning condemnation of those who professed to be the religious teachers of the people and yet were lacking in the spirit and practice of love: "Ye devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers." Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith."

The holy indignation of that great heart of love burned in hot flame against all injustice and unkindness, against all unmercifulness. In the same judgment scene in which such honour

is put upon common kindnesses, the most withering anathema is uttered against the mere neglect of mercifulness—not feeding the hungry, not giving drink to the thirsty, not showing hospitality to the stranger, not ministering to the sick. It is not enough to refrain from rudeness, harshness and unkindness; the lack of mercifulness is sin against the law of love.

As we study closely the New Testament definitions of religion we learn how inadequate are those conceptions of a Christian life which leave out the practice of the law of mercy and love. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." "Whoso hath this world's good,

and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?"

The blessedness pronounced on the merciful is: "They shall obtain mercy." Thus mercy is indeed "twice blessed. It blesses him who gives and him who takes."

Nothing is made more clear in the Scriptures than that the reception of the divine goodness depends upon the spirit of those to whom it is offered. God's love is for all; His affection goes out toward every life. Yet not every one receives that love. Some hearts are shut against it. Men live in castles of their own, and so inviolable is personality that no one, not even God, can

force the door, or cross the threshold, until the master inside rises and opens. Only when there is love within to respond can the love that stands without and knocks be admitted. There must be, in some faint measure at least, a corresponding spirit in us to receive any gift or blessing from God. We find in God an echo of our own heart-beats. This is taught in a remarkable passage in one of the psalms:

With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful;
With the perfect man thou wilt shew thyself perfect;
With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure;
And with the perverse thou wilt shew thyself froward.
For thou wilt save the afflicted people;
But the haughty eyes thou wilt bring down.

It is true, therefore, in relation to God, that the merciful

shall obtain mercy, and the unmerciful shall find no mercy. This is taught in the petition, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Thus divine mercy and human mercifulness are linked together. If we will not forgive we cannot be forgiven. But if we forgive we shall find forgiveness. So important is this truth that our Lord repeated the teaching over and over, speaking one of His great parables to enforce the lesson that the unmerciful cannot obtain mercy from God.

But the same is true in our relations with our fellow men—the merciful obtain mercy and the unmerciful find no pity. Those who judge others shall be judged by others. With the

measure that we mete it shall be measured to us. We receive what we give. We find in the world what we are prepared in ourselves to find. The lover of beauty finds beauty everywhere, even in a desert, while he who has no eye for loveliness finds dreariness even in a garden. He who has songs in his heart hears songs in every place, while the man with no music in his soul would hear only harsh discords if even angels were singing. The selfish man tells you everybody is selfish, while he who has a generous heart finds generous spirits in every company. The unmerciful find only coldness and ungentleness, while the merciful obtain mercy.

Then there is the law of spiritual harvest—whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Those who deal unjustly shall gather injustice into their own bosom, sooner or later, and those who scatter merciful deeds shall harvest mercy.

"We give a scanty draught to one
Who faints beside the way:
There flows a fountain for our thirst
Some weary, woesome day.

"We give a little flower of love
To light a darkened room;
And lo! our gardens overflow
With beauty and with bloom."

Sometimes, however, this beatitude may seem to fail in this world, and those who sow love in the fields of need may appear to get no return, or may suffer neglect or ingratitude in the days of their own need.

But this world does not see the end. Ofttimes there is only the sowing here, the harvest coming in the life beyond. We may be sure at least that in the end there will be no failure of fitting return. We have our Master's word that not even the giving of a cup of cold water shall miss its reward. No ministry of kindness will be forgotten or will fail to bring its blessing.

"The look of sympathy, the gentle word,
Spoken so low that only angels heard;
The secret act of pure self-sacrifice,
Unseen by men, but marked by angels' eyes—
These are not lost.

"The kindly plan devised for other's good,
So seldom guessed, so little understood,
The quiet, steadfast love that strove to win
Some wanderer from the ways of sin—
These are not lost.

"Not lost, O Lord! for in Thy city bright
Our eyes shall see the past by clearer light,

The Master's Blesseds

And things long hidden from our gaze below
Thou wilt reveal; and we shall surely know
These are not lost."

Two things this old world needs—tenderness and cheer. All about us are hearts hungry for sympathy, for kindness. Then everywhere are weary and discouraged ones, needing the uplift of hope to make them brave and strong enough to go forward to meet the future. We could do nothing better with our life than to consecrate it to a ministry of tenderness and encouragement. This is one of heaven's paths to happiness, for the merciful shall obtain mercy.

VI

The Beatitude of Purity

Blessed are the Pure in Heart: for They Shall See God

"Open the door of the soul, let in
Strong, pure thoughts which shall banish sin:
They shall grow and bloom with a grace divine,
And their vint shall be sweeter than that of the vine."

VI

A LITTLE child was asked which of the beatitudes she would choose, if she could have but one of them. After reading them over thoughtfully, she said she would choose the beatitude of a pure heart, for if she had this one she would have all the others with it.

This beatitude of a pure heart seems at first an impossible one for those who belong to the human family. Who can claim it? Only unfallen angels are without sin's stains. But it is not sinlessness that is thus chosen for blessedness. The Master

would not offer a blessing which the lowliest of His disciples could not obtain.

There is an Old Testament beatitude which throws light upon this word of Christ's. It reads, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." We would have filled in the sentence differently—"Blessed is he who has never sinned." But the way it is in the Bible is far better. Our way of writing it would have shut out all the world; God's way leaves twelve pearl gates which are never shut by day or by night, and there is no one so guilty that he may not come within the circle of blessing.

The beatitude is not for the sinless, but for sinners forgiven.

The Pure in Heart

The pure are those who have been purified. The visions of heaven in the Apocalypse show us saints in glory, wearing spotless garments; but we are told that "these are they who . . . have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The robes are washed robes—they were not always white.

Then we remember that there is a word in an old book which runs thus: "Wash you, make you clean. . . . Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." There is a New Testament word also which answers as antiphonal to this: "If we confess our sins, He is

faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

It is very clear, therefore, that this beatitude, lofty and heavenly as it is, is not impossible of attainment and does not exclude any sinner of the human family. The pure in heart are sinners who have been forgiven and cleansed.

Forgiveness is not all. One might be forgiven, and yet be no holier, no cleaner in heart, than before. The old evil might still be in the nature, and the stains of sin might still blotch the life. But the divine forgiveness not only remits the penalty—it also takes away the sin itself. It

changes the heart. "Ye must be born again" is its word of healing. Into the forgiven soul there comes the Holy Guest to stay, and He cleanses His new habitation to make it fit to be God's temple. A pure heart is one in which the divine Spirit lives.

Yet it is no ordinary holiness which is described in this beatitude. All the beatitudes are for lofty spiritual attainments, attainments which are not easily reached. It costs to be good and to wear the honours of real sainthood. Not all Christians are pure in heart. Too many live on a low plane. They are borderland Christians. Like the Israelites, settling in their promised land, they do not

drive out all their enemies. They tolerate some of them. They allow favourite sins to share life with them.

Christians with a pure heart have exterminated every Canaanite. They have made an entire consecration of their life to God. This means that they have given Christ full possession. We often ask how we may have more of the Spirit. It has been well suggested that we should ask also how the Spirit may have more of us. Many of us are keeping from Christ some little or larger room in our heart which is shut up and dark. It we would become indeed pure in heart, we must see that the Spirit gets

possession of every such dark corner.

To be pure in heart is to have a clean heart in which nothing unholy is permitted to dwell for a moment. Temptation is not sin, but sin begins when an evil thought or feeling is admitted, entertained, cherished. As one has said, we cannot keep the birds from flying about our heads, but it is our fault if they build their nests in our hair.

Our heart is made for God, to be God's home; anything that is unmeet for God's presence leaves a stain on the heart which admits it. Not only all foul lusts and desires, all gross sins, but refined evil, evil which is so subtle as almost to pass for holiness, must be excluded from

the heart of purity. All bitterness and anger, all resentment and grudging, all pride and deceit, all craft and guile, all worldliness and selfishness, must be shut out of the heart that would get this blessing. The love of God must fill it, and this love has also its manward side. Unlovingness is the most deadly of heresies. God is love, and only those who love can have God in their heart.

The emphasis is on the word heart. It is not enough to be clean outside. In our Lord's days much attention was paid by religious people to external purity. They had many ceremonies of washing. They washed nearly everything they used,—not to make it clean, but

to make it holy. They were quick to condemn any one who failed to observe all the rules for outward cleansing. Yet Jesus reproved them for their insincerity, for while they made clean the outside of the cup and the platter, within they were full of extortion and excess. He said they were like whited sepulchres, which appeared beautiful without, but within were full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. It is not enough to have a fair exterior; the heart must be pure. It is in the heart that God would live. The heart, too, is the centre of the life. If the heart be not holy, the life cannot be holy.

There is a story of a mother

whose only child had died. To occupy her heart and hands in some way in connection with her vanished treasure, thus finding comfort, the mother took a photograph of her child which she possessed, and with deft fingers touched this and that feature until through love-inspired skill the face of the child in the picture seemed almost to live again, so wondrous did the likeness appear. Then the photograph was laid carefully away in a drawer for several days. When it was taken out again the mother was pained to see the face marred with strange blotches, and spoiled. Patiently, however, she went over the picture once more, with her

brush restoring the loveliness which had been so marred. But when it had been laid away as before, for a little while, and taken out, the blotches had reappeared. The fault was in the substance on which the picture was printed. There were certain chemicals lurking in its texture, which stained the delicate colours put on by the mother's brush.

So it is ofttimes in human lives. The utmost care may be taken in culture and training. But so long as there are in the heart, in the substance of the nature, evil dispositions, debasing tendencies, lusts and passions unmastered, these unclean qualities will work out from the heart and reveal themselves

in blemishes in the character. The heart must be made clean. It must be washed in the blood of Christ and then filled by the Holy Spirit.

One tells of going with a party down into a coal mine. Close to the gangway there grew a white plant. All about it flew the black dust, but on the plant's whiteness no trace of it stayed. The visitor could not understand how the plant retained its purity in such a place. One of the miners took a handful of the coal-dust and threw it on the leaves, but not a particle adhered. The plant was covered with a wonderful enamel on which nothing could leave a stain. Growing in an atmosphere filled with floating

black dust, its snowy purity remained immaculate.

It is part of pure religion, says an inspired word, to keep one's self unspotted from the world. We cannot flee away from sin's atmosphere or from amid its unholy influences. It is not the Master's plan for us that we should be taken out of the sinful world, to live our life where no evil can touch us. But the problem is to be in the world, to live in it, without being stained by its evil. The God who can make a little plant so that no dust can stain it can by His grace also make our lives impervious to sin's defiling. A pure heart is the secret.

"They shall see God." This

is a wonderful promise. We know that in glory the redeemed shall see God. But the promise refers to this life as well as to the beatific vision in heaven. The pure in heart shall see God here. In the olden days holy men sometimes were granted wonderful visions of God. Theophanies, we call these exceptional manifestations. The most marvellous of all revealings of God to men was when Jesus Christ was on the earth. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," He said, when one of His disciples implored Him to show them the Father.

Jesus has now passed out of mortal sight, and yet we have His promise to be with us al-

ways. He who sees Christ now sees the Father revealed in Him We see Christ by faith—the pure in heart see Him. The clouds and mists and dust that hide the blue sky, the shining sun and the glory of the stars, all are earth-born. They are never part of the sky itself. The heavens breed nothing that hides or dims their beauty. In like manner, whatever hides God's face from any life is born of the life itself. Only sinful thoughts and feelings obscure the heavenly vision. But when the heart is clean and pure, with no mists and clouds of sin arising, we can look unhindered into God's very face.

It is possible to live in close fellowship with God, conscious

evermore of His approving smile. The story of Brother Lawrence, the simple-minded cook of the Carmelite monastery, illustrates what is attainable in the way of seeing God in this present life. The phrase he used continually to describe his theory of Christian living was "the practice of the presence of God." He said that for many years he had never lost the sense of the presence and companionship of Christ, and that he was as conscious of it while serving in the noise and clutter of his kitchen as when engaged in the holiest exercise of devotion. What he learned to do we may learn to do. The pure in heart shall see God, and the vision need

not be interrupted by any task or duty, by any sorrow or trial.

Then one day we shall slip away from these scenes of earth. Our eyes shall close on all familiar things. Next moment they will open on the unveiled face of Christ. We shall see Him as He is, and we shall be made like Him, and shall be satisfied, with no more unfulfilled yearnings or desires.

"From the dust of the weary highway,
From the smart of sorrow's rod,
Into the royal presence,
They are bidden as guests of God.
The veil from their eyes is taken,
Sweet mysteries they are shown,
Their doubts and fears are over,
For they know as they are known.
"For them there should be rejoicing
And festival array,
As for the bride in her beauty
Whom love hath taken away;

Sweet hours of peaceful waiting,
Till the path that we have trod
Shall end at the Father's gateway,
And we are the guests of God."

To enter the beautiful gate of this beatitude we must seek the purifying of our heart and the cleansing of our life. Without Christ all such striving is in vain. Only as we enter into the spirit of His life, and eat His flesh and drink His blood, can we have the pure heart to which this vision is promised. Without holiness no man can see God either now or ever. But if we seek indeed to be filled with Christ, His purity will become ours.

There is a pleasing story that when a beloved artist-pupil had wrought long at his picture, growing weary and discour-

aged by reason of the many faults of his work, and had fallen asleep by his easel, the master came softly and with his own hand corrected the pupil's mistakes, and finished his picture. So, when we strive to be holy and to do our best, and yet are disheartened by our failures, the Master will come and with His own hand correct our mistakes and finish our work—the fashioning of His own image on our soul. When we awake we shall be satisfied with His likeness.

VII

The Beatitude of the Peacemaker

BLESSED ARE THE PEACE-MAKERS: FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF God

" *The thing we long for that we are*
For one transcendent moment."

VII

PEACE is one of the great words of the Bible. It is a transfigured word. It shines like a brilliant diamond. It is a word which includes in its meaning all the blessings and all the graces of spiritual life. To have peace is to be rich. To be a maker of peace is to be a dispenser of the best that even heaven has to give to men.

God is the great Peacemaker. It is the peace of God Himself which is offered to us. An old promise tells us that God will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are stayed on

Him. He is the maker of the peace—ours is but the staying of the trembling life on His almightiness.

Christ is a maker of peace. He was foretold as the Prince of Peace. When He was born the angel said that to make peace on earth was His mission. Before He went away He told His disciples that in the world's tribulations they should have peace in Him. He also bequeathed His own peace to His friends. Then, after He arose, His salutation to them was, "Peace be unto you."

Not only did He give peace to men; He first made the peace. It was not easy—it was not a mere heart's wish a blessing only in words that

He gave. Peace comes as the price of war. Men give their lives, and on bloody fields peace is purchased. Christ made peace for the world by going to His cross. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." There is an old legend which tells of Christ's walking by the sea of Galilee, wearing brown sandals. Father Ryan puts it thus:

"He walked beside the sea; He took His sandals off
To bathe His weary feet in the pure cool wave—
For He had walked across the desert sands
All day long—and as He bathed His feet
He murmured to Himself, 'Three years! Three years!
And then, poor feet, the cruel nails will come
And make you bleed; but that blood will lave
All weary feet on all their thorny ways.'"

Christ is the maker of the peace which has been changing all life these nineteen centuries.

The old cruelty has been yielding to humaneness. Love's warm pulsings have been throbbing out from Calvary as from a breaking heart into the whole world. The spirit of peace has been slowly spreading among the nations and in homes and communities. It is all the fruit of Christ's cross. He is the great Peacemaker.

But every true disciple of the Master's is likewise called to be a peacemaker. To begin with, every believer is to have peace, Christ's own peace, the peace of God, in his heart. Toward this blessed quiet of soul all Christian culture tends. The fruit of the Spirit is peace. One who has learned this deepest of all lessons of faith and is

kept in perfect peace amid all the world's babel and all its strifes, is already a peacemaker. Nothing else so quiets other turbulent spirits as the influence of a life which moves calm and undisturbed amid all confusions and alarms. He who has received the peace of Christ makes peace for others. One person who is fearless and trustful in time of storm or danger makes it easier for all others in the company to be quiet.

There is a lesson also of peaceableness which is suggested in this beatitude. We are to make peace by restraining in ourselves all that is opposed to this spirit. There has been a tendency in the

Church to make too little of the culture of the graces of Christian life. Doctrinal soundness has been insisted upon, as a test of true Christian life, more than sweetness of spirit and beauty of character. An irritable temper is too often regarded, not indeed as a quality to be admired and commended, but at the worst as an excusable infirmity, so common among good people that no one can reprove his neighbour for his failure at this point. So many Christian men and women are touchy and easily offended, that it seems necessary to leave a wide margin in defining what religion requires of its followers in the matter of patience and forbearance.

But the teaching of the New Testament is very clear and explicit on this point. The Master Himself insists on love, not merely as a fine sentiment, but as a quality of daily life, affecting all its relations and its contacts with others. "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." No place would seem to be left in Christian life for resisting wrong.

When we turn to the Epistles we find many an exhortation to peaceable living. St. Paul, for example, counsels Chris-

tians as far as in them lies to live peaceably with all men. That is, if there must be quarrelling it should not be the fault of the Christian. He must not begin it. It must not come through his insisting on his rights. He must do all in his power to get along with his neighbour without strife or contention. If others are disposed to be quarrelsome, he must meet the disagreeable spirit with love. "The servant of the Lord must not strive—must not be contentious—but must be gentle unto all men."

The whole New Testament thus teaches and impresses the duty of living with others in a quiet and peaceable way. What-

ever is unloving in act, word, or spirit, is to be avoided. All malice, and bitterness, and all clamour, and evil-speaking, are to be put off, and all meekness, patience, kindness, and thoughtfulness are to be put on. The full lesson is summed up in St. Paul's matchless picture of love in a life: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil." That is only peaceableness writ large. There is no place here for quarrelsomeness.

Perhaps the Christian teaching on this subject is really not over-illustrated in the old

story of the two monks who had never quarrelled. They had lived together for many years in a cave, learning to love each other with an ever-deepening love. Wearying at last of the monotony of their life, one of them suggested to the other that they should have a quarrel, after the fashion of the people of the outside world.

"But about what shall we quarrel?" asked the other.

"We will take this stone and put it between us, and I will say, 'This stone is mine,' and you will say, 'This stone is mine,' and so we will quarrel."

The stone was placed between them.

"This stone is mine," said one.

"I think the stone is mine," the other gently replied.

"If the stone is thine, take it," said the one who had proposed the quarrel.

They found it impossible to quarrel. It should be so with all the friends of Christ. There is no beatitude for an irascible temper, but there are two beatitudes for those who avoid quarrelling—"Blessed are the meek," and "Blessed are the peacemakers."

We ought to be peacemakers by living so that it will be impossible for any one to have strife or contention with us. The influence of such a life in a community works deeply and

widely towards peaceableness. One contentious person can fill a whole neighbourhood with strife. A quarrelsome man stirs up bitterness wherever he goes. But one person who has the forbearing spirit of Christ, who meekly endures wrongs rather than contend against them, is a maker of peace. Others are influenced by his example. Every time we keep silent under insult, and loving and sweet under irritation and provocation, we have made it easier for all about us to do the same.

There is still another sense in which every follower of Christ should be a peacemaker. He should seek to make peace between man and man. One

way of doing this is by exerting his influence in every way against strifes and quarrels. We find continually as we go among men the beginnings of bitterness and alienation. In every community there are whisperers who go about retailing gossip whose tendency is to separate chief friends. These are not peacemakers but peace-destroyers. They seem to delight in putting doubt and suspicion into hearts which heretofore have known only trust and confidence. One often finds in intimate fellowship with others that two neighbours or friends are in danger of becoming enemies. Now is the opportunity for the peacemaker's ministry. In-

stead of intensifying the beginning of bitterness, confirming the suspicion or doubt, or encouraging the strife, we may set about to try to heal the breach and restore confidence. Usually it is not hard to do this. Many quarrels begin in a misunderstanding, and a few strong, manly words, spoken by a true-hearted peacemaker, will show, first to one and then to the other, that there really is no cause for ill-feeling, that the doubt of loyalty is unjust, and that separation or estrangement is not only unnecessary, but would be sinful.

A true peacemaker, going about thus, trying to draw people ever closer together, and to heal all threatened contentions

and quarrels, is doing a divine work of love in the world. The great majority of strifes and differences among men are needless. They are caused by the wicked meddlesomeness of outside parties. Or they come from hasty words or acts, unconfessed and unrepented of. Trifles are exaggerated, or purely imaginary slights or injuries are allowed to kindle bitterness which burns like a consuming fire. The peacemaker's word spoken at the right moment would prevent all this.

Another part of the peacemaker's work is upon those who have actually become estranged, who have drifted apart, into open enmity. In every community there are

such persons. Sometimes they live under the same roof and eat at the same table. There are brothers and sisters, there are husbands and wives, who are farther apart than any strangers. A thick wall of cold rock has been built up between them.

Reconciliation between such effectually separated friends, especially when they are of the same flesh, may seem hopeless. Yet even in such alienations the peacemaker's holy work may be crowned with success. It requires great wisdom. It requires purest and most unselfish love. It requires the spirit of Christ, tender with true compassion and yearning for the good of the lives that

are estranged. It requires patience—too much haste or too great eagerness ofttimes destroys in one moment the work of many days. It requires prayer—only God can be the real peacemaker in such cases, and the most we can do is to interpret the love of Christ to the hearts that are at strife, and ask God to melt those hearts with the fire of His tenderness.

Still another way in which we can do the work of the peacemaker is by seeking to diffuse more and more of the love of Christ among men. This we may do in our own life, showing patience, gentleness, and forbearance wherever we are, and under whatsoever

treatment we may be called to endure. Christians should make their homes true homes of peace. No angry word should ever be heard there, no strife should ever be permitted there, no outburst of temper should ever occur there. Christian people would go far toward filling the world with peace, if they all would realize the holy peace of Christ within their own home doors.

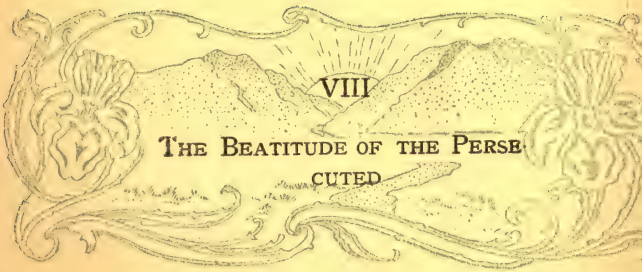
But our home is not our only sphere of influence. We may do much to promote the spirit of peace in our wider circles. It is wonderful how much a single noble nature may do toward making it easier for all men in a neighbourhood to live sweetly. Sometimes in com-

munities there are contentions which grow into feuds; yet now and then we see one generous spirit by the rich abundance of its own unselfish love lift the tides of good feeling so high that all strife is forgotten.

Then the true peacemaker is a maker of peace not only between man and man, but also between men and God. This is the holiest of all peacemaking. We may do good by seeking to keep men from drifting apart, and by reconciling again friends who have become alienated; but nobler work by far is it to bring human souls, estranged from God, into fellowship with Him. He who brings a lost life to Christ

makes peace which shall abide through eternal years.

It is very significant that the blessedness of the peacemakers is that they shall be called the children of God. This would seem to be the highest of all the honours promised in this wonderful group of beatitudes. The peacemakers are called sons of God because they are like God, and their holy work is the very work of God in this world. We are indeed God's children just in the measure in which we have in us the mind that was in Christ Jesus, and follow the things that make for peace and make peace.



VIII

The Beatitude of the Persecuted

BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE: FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

"No life
Can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife
And all life not be purer and stronger thereby."

VIII

BLESSED means happy. It seems strange indeed to hear our Master say, "Happy are they which are persecuted." Of course He did not mean to say that persecution is pleasant, that it gives delight to the feelings and sensibilities. He had in His mind a deeper thought of happiness than the men and women of the world have in their eager quest. It is heaven's conception of happiness that is folded up in this word blessed. It is a happiness which has no sorrow mingled in it, no thorns in its pillow, no

poison in its cup. It is not surface happiness, for to men's eyes the happy are they who are the world's favourites, while those who are hated, hunted and harried men pity.

The Master's meaning becomes yet more clear when we remember that it is not in persecution itself that the happiness or blessedness lies. There can be nothing really good or pleasant in being scourged, tortured or exposed to persecution in any form. Pain is not pleasant—it cannot by any straining of the imagination be made an agreeable experience. The same is true of suffering in every form. We are never required to enjoy it. No measure of grace imparted to us while

we suffer, no revealing of the love of God or of the presence of Jesus Christ, no uplift of the soul by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, can ever make physical pain and suffering pleasant. It is not thus by some magical transformation of sorrow into joy, of anguish into ecstasy, that God turns our mourning into songs of gladness.

Nor does the grace of Christ make the bitterness of persecution sweet to the experience. The lash cuts no less deeply and causes no less poignant suffering because it is a Christian who is bending under its cruel strokes. The fire is no less hot and produces no less anguish because it is a saint of God

about whom the flames are wrapping.

The blessing is found not in the physical qualities of persecution, but in something which comes out of the persecution. The state of being persecuted is a blessed one, because it puts one in the way of receiving rich spiritual benefit. The experience of persecution, however great the loss and suffering it produces, is blessed because of the compensation it brings in the purifying and enriching of the character, and in other benefits which result from it.

There is a very important qualification in the terms of this beatitude which must not be overlooked—it is they who have been persecuted for righteous-

ness' sake who are blessed. Then in the direct application of the beatitude to His disciples, the Master also made it very clear that the persecution must be on account of their religion. "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." The evil things said against them must be false. If the accusations are true, there is no promise of blessing in the enduring of them. "What glory is it, if, when you sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

Then the persecution must be

for Christ's sake; that is, because we are His, because we are identified with Him and are living His life in the world. It must be for righteousness' sake; that is, because we are righteous, because of our goodness. There are those who bring persecution upon themselves by their own manner of life. Even religious people sometimes are hard to live with. Their religion is not beautiful nor winning. The good fruits on their life grow on briery stems or among thorns. They invite and coax persecution. Then there are those who herald some iniquity under the guise of religion and call the opposition which they meet from good people persecution. But there is no comfort here for such.

It is only when men suffer for the sake of the good that is in them that this beatitude spreads its white wings over them.

What are the blessings which come in being persecuted for righteousness' sake? One is the uplifting of the soul into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. We talk much in the easy parlance of our religious meetings about becoming like Christ. We fail, however, to realize or to remember that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the life of Christ was His suffering for righteousness' sake. The world hated Him and followed Him with its persecutions till it had Him nailed on His cross. When we talk lightly of our desire to be like Christ, we usually

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with Christ.

"Lord! since our griefs on Thee were laid,
And Thou hast felt their sting,
Help us, in holiest calm, to take
Our turn of suffering.
Thou didst look on unto Thy joy,
And so, by grace, will we;
But we would clasp Thy cross, and feel
We owe that joy to Thee."

Another blessing in bei

persecuted is found in the testing of faith. While life is easy, with no opposition, no taunt or sneer, no call for courage, we may not be altogether sure of our loyalty, or that we could endure persecution. Too often those who confess Christ in the quiet of a sheltered life, where every influence is congenial and encouraging, when they are thrust out amid worldly antagonisms, exposed to ridicule, and compelled continually to show where they stand, fail and go back from Christ. We are not sure that our untested faith is genuine. Or it may be genuine and yet be weak and faulty, needing to be strengthened and purified. Persecution tries the Christian's faith and brings out

its latent golden qualities, so that it shines in radiant beauty. St. Peter speaks of believers being put to grief in manifold temptations, "that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Another blessing of being persecuted is in the enriching of other lives which comes through the tears and sufferings of the faithful. No one has ever endured persecution with submission and patience, but the world has been made better. Every tear shed in witnessing to the truth has fertilized one spot of the earth. Every drop

of martyr blood that has fallen to the ground has caused some plant of righteousness to grow more luxuriantly. We do not think often enough of what we owe to those who have gone before us and have given their life in suffering and sacrifice for holy causes. Every blessing we enjoy represents a martyrdom somewhere in the past. Truth has always been advanced through the persecution of those who at first stood up alone to declare what God had taught them.

At the time it seemed as if noble and worthy lives had been thrown away, wasted, uselessly sacrificed. John the Baptist was declared by Christ Himself to be greatest among

men born of women. He wielded immense influence. Yet he preached only a short time when persecution cast him into a dungeon and silenced his voice. A few months later his head was one day carried by a dancing girl into the king's banqueting hall and exhibited with cruel delight. "What a waste of life!" his friends said. But was it a waste? Could John have done more for the world by a score more years of preaching, than he did through his martyr death?

Or take Stephen. He had a magnificent equipment for service. He made at once a tremendous impression by his preaching. He had just begun to witness for Christ. Then

came martyrdom. His eloquent voice was silenced. His great heart of love ceased to beat. We would say that the church suffered an irreparable loss in Stephen's martyrdom. If only he had lived thirty years more of that noble life, how he would have enriched the world!

No; John did more for Christianity by means of his tragic death than he could have done if he had lived a hundred years; and Stephen's blood as it was poured out that day did more to promote the cause of Christianity than he could have done if he had been permitted to live in comfort, and preach, unhindered, to the end of his day. So it has always been; martyrs' blood has been the seed of the

church; martyr fires have lighted the way to new conquests. "The angels of martyrdom and victory," says Mazzini, "are brothers; both extend protecting wings over the cradle of the future life." Sacrifice is the law of progress. There are times when the truest way of helping a cause is not by living to advocate it, but by dying as a witness. The blessings of liberty have come to us through tears and blood. Along the centuries holy men wore chains and languished in dungeons, that to-day we may have civil and religious freedom. Blessed are they who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake; they have lightened the world by

their testimony and fertilized it with their tears and blood.

Another blessing from being persecuted is found in the reward which will be given to those who suffer for the sake of Christ and His truth. "Great is your reward in heaven." Soldiers who have been wounded in their country's service are welcomed home with joy when they return from the war. Their scars are not looked upon as disfigurements, but as decorations of honour. Those who in this world suffer in serving Christ, enduring persecution for His sake and in His work, will have their reward in heaven in many ways. For one thing, they will have a higher rank among the re-

deemed than those who may have wrought faithfully, but without cost in enmity and suffering. The scars of woundings received in the cause of the Redeemer will be marks of honour among the glorified. If we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with Him. No truth is taught more clearly in the New Testament than that losses met in serving Christ in this world will have their abundant compensation in the life of heaven.

These are only suggestions of the blessedness of those who endure persecution for righteousness' sake. St. Paul spoke of the scars he bore in his body from the scourgings, stonings and chains of his persecutions,

as "marks of the Lord Jesus." They set him apart before all the world as belonging to Christ.

Amid all that he had suffered as a Christian his real inner life was unscarred, and would be presented to God without marring.

Of course, it is implied that we endure persecution with patience, with submission, without bitterness or resentment. There is no one who can harm us but ourself. If we chafe, resist and complain; if we grow angry and unforgiving, we have let the hurts of persecution reach our soul with their wounding and scarring. But if while we endure wrong we keep our heart sweet and

loving, even the worst enmity cannot harm us, and we shall find great blessing in suffering for the sake of Christ.

The promise given with this beatitude is, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Already the kingdom of heaven is in them, and they are possessors of its honours. When this world's life for them is ended, and they pass through the eternal gate, it will be to enter into the fulness of the glory of the kingdom, in the immediate presence of the king.

It may be thought that to most followers of Christ now in Christian lands this beatitude can mean but little, since persecution is so rare. It is true that the days of the mar-

tyr's stake and block and of chains and dungeons for righteousness' sake are past. Yet there are other forms of persecution which, if not so cruel and terrible, yet try men's souls and put to sorest test their loyalty to Christ. The world loves Christ no more now than it did when it nailed Him on the cross. Satan is no less active now in opposing the advance of Christ's kingdom than when Saul was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples. It is not the spirit of enmity, but its form of manifestation, which has changed. Instead of the rack, the thumbscrew, the hot iron and the block, it is the taunt, the sneer, the laugh that

now are the instruments of persecution. It still costs to be a faithful follower of Christ. We must still suffer persecution for righteousness' sake if we would be unalterably loyal to the truth.

Still, therefore, does this beatitude shine above the gate of life. Still is it true that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Still does the blessedness of the persecuted await all who would be faithful to Christ. The time will never come when the way of righteousness will be the easy, flower-strewn way. Always it will lie over sharp stones and amid thorns. But ever, beyond the pain and cost, is the shining reward for all

who faint not in their trials. The sufferings of the persecuted enrich the world and glorify Christ, and those who are faithful unto death will receive the crown of life.

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